

Did Goran Ivanisevic Win the 2001 Wimbledon Championships Just by Hitting Aces?

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Introduction

Goran Ivanisevic defeated Pat Rafter in the final, 6–3, 3–6, 6–3, 2–6, 9–7 to win the Gentlemen's Singles tennis title at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships. Ivanisevic became the first unseeded player to win the title since Boris Becker in 1985. He became the first wild card to win a Grand Slam. Before the tournament he was ranked 125th and after the win he climbed 109 places to 16th. He had reached the final three times before (in 1992, 1994 and 1998) but lost each time (to Agassi, and Sampras twice, respectively). Goran Ivanisevic has the most aces in a single season with 1,477 in 1996. He also has the second most in a tournament with 212 when he won the 2001 Wimbledon title.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_Wimbledon_Championships_-_Men%27s_Singles

Statistics on aces

Table 1 represents the top 7 players that served the most number of aces on all surfaces in 2001. The average number of aces per match is simply calculated as the total number of aces divided by the number of matches played. For example, Goran Ivanisevic served 801 aces in 51 matches with an average of $801/51=15.7$ aces per match. The average number of aces served per match are also given for these top 7 players on a grass court surface. Note the average number of aces per match is biased towards the length of a match, however table 1 still provides useful information as to which players are typically serving more aces. Goran Ivanisevic averaged the most number of aces per match on all surfaces (15.7) and on grass which is played at Wimbledon (23.8).

Player	All surfaces			Grass		
	Number	Matches	Average	Number	Matches	Average
Goran Ivanisevic	801	51	15.7	238	10	23.8
Gustavo Kuerten	683	78	8.8	-	-	-
Yevgeny Kafelnikov	669	97	6.9	70	7	10.0
Wayne Arthurs	650	43	15.1	113	8	14.1
Greg Rusedski	629	62	10.1	145	12	12.1
Pete Sampras	627	51	12.3	139	8	17.4
Jan-Michael Gambill	608	60	10.1	50	5	10.0

Table 1: The top 7 players that served the most number of aces on all surfaces in 2001.

<https://www.atptour.com/en/stats/aces/2001/all/all/>
<https://www.atptour.com/en/stats/aces/2001/grass/all/>

Similarly, table 2 represents the top 7 players that served the most number of aces on all surfaces throughout their career as of the 2/10/2019. Goran Ivanisevic is ranked third for the average number of aces per match on all surfaces (13.9) and on grass (21.1). Note that that this average on grass which is played at Wimbledon is only slightly behind Ivo Karlovic (23.5) and John Isner (22.8).

Player	All surfaces			Grass		
	Number	Matches	Averages	Number	Matches	Averages
Ivo Karlovic	13,580	681	19.9	2,726	116	23.5
John Isner	11,846	650	18.2	1,619	71	22.8
Roger Federer	11,225	1,434	7.8	2,210	212	10.4
Goran Ivanisevic	10,131	731	13.9	1,791	85	21.1
Feliciano Lopez	9,508	909	10.5	1,871	124	15.1
Andy Roddick	9,068	776	11.7	1,461	103	14.2
Pete Sampras	8,713	792	11.0	1,451	105	13.8

Table 2: The top 7 players that served the most number of aces on all surfaces throughout their career as of the 2/10/2019.

<https://www.atptour.com/en/stats/aces/all/all/all/>
<https://www.atptour.com/en/stats/aces/all/grass/all/>

Statistics at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships

Table 3 represents the opponent and score line for each match played by Goran Ivanisevic at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships. Note the large number of tiebreak games (and score lines of 64, 63, 75 and 97) played in all these matches suggesting that Ivanisevic has a strong serve and relatively weak return of serve.

Round	Opponent	Score line
1R	Fredrik Jonsson (Q)	64 64 64
2R	Carlos Moya (21)	67 ⁶ 63 64 64
3R	Andy Roddick	76 ⁵ 75 36 63
4R	Greg Rusedski	76 ⁵ 64 64
Qtrs	Marat Safin (4)	76 ² 75 36 76 ³
Semis	Tim Henman (6)	75 67 ⁶ 06 76 ⁵ 63
Finals	Patrick Rafter (3)	63 36 63 26 97

Table 3: The opponent and score line for each match played by Goran Ivanisevic at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships.

<https://www.atptour.com/en/scores/archive/wimbledon/540/2001/draws?matchType=singles>

Table 4 represents match statistics for each match played by Ivanisevic at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships. The average percentage of points won on serve at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships was 64.5%. Therefore, the average percentage of points won on

the return of serve is $100\% - 64.5\% = 35.5\%$. Ivanisevic was above the average percentage of points won on serve in all matches, and from round 2 onwards, Ivanisevic was below the percentage of points won on the return of serve, indicating why there were a large number of tiebreak games (and score lines of 64, 63, 75 and 97) played in all his matches from table 1 (dominate on serve but relatively weak on the return of serve). The % of points won on serve by hitting an ace for each match is calculated as the number of aces served for the match divided by the number of points won on serve. For example, in the first round Ivanisevic served 22 aces for the match and won 60 out of 71 points on serve. Therefore the % of points won on serve by hitting an ace for this match is $22/60=36.7\%$. Note the relatively high proportion of points won on serve by hitting an ace (ranging from 24.3% in the finals to 47.2% in the 3rd round). Also worth noting is the relatively high percentage of points won on the 1st serve suggesting that Ivanisevic won a lot of points by the serve being unreturnable (even without hitting an ace), indicating that Ivanisevic was possibly trying to hit an ace on every 1st serve.

Match Statistic	1R	2R	3R	4R	Qtrs	Semis	Finals
Aces	22	34	42	22	30	35	27
% of points won on serve by hitting an ace	36.7%	37.4%	47.2%	31.9%	29.7%	30.4%	24.3%
Double Faults	4	9	5	4	9	12	15
1 st Serve	62%	60%	71%	65%	61%	62%	55%
1 st Serve Point Won	91%	88%	89%	93%	89%	80%	81%
2 nd Serve Points Won	74%	57%	59%	60%	54%	45%	51%
Service Points Won	85%	75%	80%	81%	75%	67%	68%
1 st Serve Return Points Won	23%	27%	22%	12%	22%	23%	23%
2 nd Serve Return Points Won	59%	40%	41%	44%	50%	37%	43%
Return Points Won	38%	33%	29%	29%	32%	28%	30%

Table 4: Match statistics for each match played by Ivanisevic at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships.

Summary

Given the dominance on serve by Ivanisevic in all matches at the 2001 Wimbledon Championships (in comparison to the overall average percentage of points won on serve as 64.5%), the relatively weak return of serve (in comparison to the overall average percentage of points on return of serve as 35.5%), relatively high proportion of points won on serve by hitting an ace, Ivanisevic averaging the most number of aces per match on all surfaces and on grass in 2001, as well as Ivanisevic averaging a high rank for the most number of aces on all surfaces and on grass for his career (in comparison to other players), suggests that Ivanisevic possibly won the 2001 Wimbledon Championships just by hitting aces.